Before I present the information on the most recent curriculum questions/concerns I want to back up a few years in order to present a context for how we got to where we are today.

In the spring I presented the green document to the board as a summary of the literacy work we have been doing. This timeline provided an abridged version of the work that has happened just at the elementary level since July of 2009.

When I began in the curriculum position I quickly became aware that the district had no formal elementary writing curriculum. This was confirmed by the literacy committee when we first met in January of 2010 and where we wanted to focus our efforts beginning with the 2010/2011 school year at the elementary level.

I also became aware at that time that PA had adopted the CCSS during the summer of 2010 and we understood that these standards much more than our current standards, had a very strong focus on writing across the three types of narrative, informational, and opinion/argument.

After examining the Calkins writing workshop materials and visiting a school in NYC where this curriculum was implemented we were ready to give it a try.

We hoped that we would be able to become a Project School that year, which would have enabled us to receive the highest quality professional development, but that didn’t work out for us the first year so instead we had a one-day overview from a former writing workshop teacher.

Teachers worked through the UoS books. We read the books cover to cover and wrote our own mini lessons. We agree to give it our best shot and decided that giving it our best was better than what the students had before in writing, which was nothing.

We also vowed to stay with the implementation of writing workshop as our elementary focus for at least three years in order to give us time to enhance our curriculum, acquire more PD, and write better mini lessons. This was our approach for 2010/2011, 2011/2012, and 2012/2013. During this time we were support by Teachers College staff developers, our own trained literacy coaches, grade-level teaming, and attendance at summer institutes at TC.

Columbia University’s Teachers College provides the reading and writing workshop program that is highly research based and has a long history of success in hundred of NYC schools that are significantly challenging economically and in diversity. Columbia University’s Teachers College has been focused on teaching and learning for over 120 years. Just last year the school received the US News and World Reports rankings of #5 in Educational Supervision, #3 in Curriculum, #6 in the Graduate School of Education, and #2 in Elementary Education.

I am providing you with a sample from the Common Core Writing Workshop text. and I’d like to point out a few things.

As I mentioned before the important of writing in the CCSS, I would like to read from the first chapter - READ PAGE 1

In chapter 2 there is a description of the features of CCSS as well as the importance of writing within the CCSS. There is also information about the three types of writing and the importance of writing across all disciplines and all teachers.

SHOW ADDITIONAL PAGES

As we monitored implementation of writing workshop we also closely monitored our scores. Even with some fluctuation of schools over the last five years we can see a positive trend.

SHOW CHART

During these first three years of writing worship implementation we often had conversations about the over into reading workshop, but we had made the commitment to stick with writing for three years and not change or add anything new. It was important to stay with the course.

During the 2012/2013 school year one of our 4th grade teachers wanted to pilot RW along with what he was doing in WW.

During this time I also dug into the latest research about what works in teaching reading.

One of the resources I studied was this book. *What Works for Struggling Readers* by Richard Allington. I choose this book because it is a book of research. It is not a sales book about a particular program, It is not written by someone who particularly agrees with one approach over another but rather Dr. Allington reports on just what the research says.

I have provided you with a sample from the book to include the chapter areas of focus as well as the summary. Again I have highlighted some areas to focus our attention SHOW THESE AREAS IN THE TEXT

I would love to share my book with you as I did with Mr. Abate earlier in the spring.

In summary, this book says kids need to read lots of books at their independent reading level. They need to read fluently. Struggling readers need more focused reading more frequently. And, commercial reading programs have never worked for all kids and never will.

Another resources I pulled from is the Pennsylvania Comprehensive Literacy Plan which provides us an explanation of what expectations the standards have for us as well as five guiding principles.

READ from PAGE 4 and READ the FIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Finally, looked at the program we have had lots of success with at the high school level called Reading Apprenticeship. I say we have had success because again we have been monitoring our scores at the high school and can track a positive trendline over the last five years. SHOW TRENDLINE

I provided the introduction in the Reading for Understanding book titled Engaged Academic Literacy for All and I’ll draw your attention to the last page where it says, “According to the NAEP…” READ THIS PARAGRAPH

So while I was reading and research and Dustin was piloting we began discussing the 2013/2014 school year in our spring grade level meetings. We talked about what part of this made sense for our work here. Many teachers visited Dustin’s classroom to look specifically at RW.

Our staff developer from TC began working with us on certain components of RW and we bought materials to review. We knew for sure we had to do something. Our scores are declining and we can see that by checking our trendline over the past 5 years. SHOW READING TRENDLINE

As we circulated through our spring grade level meetings our grade level teachers made decisions as a team what they wanted to do with reading this year. This gets us to the bottom of the timeline and were we pick up on the back with what has been happening since May.

Teachers began thinking about UoS in reading and how they would align with UoS in writing. They began making decisions about what parts of their current reading program they wanted to change. For example, some teachers wanted to refine guided reading to be more of a RW structure. Some teachers wanted to introduce Interactive Read Alouds, etc.

We moved in this direction for a number of reasons:

#1 the UoS in writing align perfectly with the UoS in reading. So while students are writing informational pieces in WW they are reading non-fiction texts in RW. While students are writing narrative pieces in WW they might be doing a character study in RW.

#2 the reading UoS, just like the writing UoS, are perfectly aligned with the core standards. There is no work on the teachers part ot make this alignment happen. It’s already done and documented

#3 the structure of RW is exactly the same as the structure of WW. Students are already familiar with this structure so it provides a predictable and comfortable transition for student with no required reteaching.

#4 It focuses on all those research best practices I previously mentioned from the research I pointed out earlier

* Long blocks of uninterrupted reading time
* Differentiation so all students have an opportunity to receive a high quality curriculum not one-size fits all approach. The instruction addresses the full range of learners.
* Students are reading books that match their level and not struggling through frustrating and impossible texts that are too difficult
* Students are receiving instruction in large group, small group, and independently
* Etc…

I have given you a sample of this that includes the overviews of each unit of study and the areas of focus. Again I would like to welcome you to borrow the who set if you would like just like Mr. Abate did in the spring.

So while all teachers made the decision to do some part of whole of RW for this school year there were lots of other things that still needed to be worked through. We had not settled on a phonics program, we had assessments and report cards to work through, and we new we needed to put into place an RtII structure in order to target additional student needs and provide a method for identifying students who may need special education services.

Which brings us to October 14th.

To process the feedback of the teachers, the principals and I got together and summarized the contents of each email into a consolidated list of positives, negatives, and suggestions for improvements. SHOW HANDOUT

As you can see from the October 14 agenda SHOW AGENDA we first discussed the revised agenda since we were originally going to be working on report cards.

We talked about the importance of the decisions to be made for the day including those items that were optional items on the table and those items that could not be changed or what we called non-negotiable.

Obviously, teaching to the standards is not a choice. The standards are passed down by legislation and used to developing our standardized assessments.

RtII is a need to ensure we are meeting the needs of all students. I explained that already.

Everything else was on the table as options.

We highlighted some items of importance READ LIST FROM AGENDA

And we set ground rules READ for the discussion because we knew the topics were hot topics and teachers felt very strongly about them.

We provided the summary of the emails as a consolidated list and then we asked some basic questions:

* Did we miss anything?
* Did we misinterpret anything?
* Do you want to add anything?

After generating the additional list of idea and thoughts we moved into decision making mode and began to build a plan for the rest of this year. We did this through a series of grade-level breakout sessions where teachers would talk in their grade level teams and we would come back together to build consensus among the K-5 team.

POINT OUT THE BLUE SHEET – Those items are on the top section of the blue handout and include:

During the afternoon session grade-levels worked on their specific grade level needs and the following list was created. All items were summarized and sent to the teachers last week. A copy of that email is included. SHOW EMAIL

Because there were some initial questions and confusions regarding CCSS as well as WTW, I am providing two additional pieces that I hope will help provide some more information to you about PA Core Standards and WTW. SHOW HANDOUTS

I am also providing you with a sample of three progress reports. This is the first time for these report s and I believe teachers are looking forward to being able to provide this information to parents. SHOW HANDOUTS

What these provide in additional to the child’s IRL are tips to support students reading at home, and a list of books can read at their level. All books on the sheets are books that our teachers have in their classroom libraries so they should not be hard to find.

Finally, I provide you with a startling statistic you may not know about. This statistic says that 2/3 of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of the 4th grade will end up in jail or on welfare. SHOW STAT

I believe literacy is the heart of everything we do. I believe we can teacher all kids to read and if we don’t then we have failed as a school district.

We bit off more than we could chew this year, which created a lot of stress on all of us. We did this because we have a lot of work that needs to be done. We took a few breaths, we readjusted, and refocused and now we have a better and more manageable plan of action.

This work is not going to be easy. I personally do not want to see the district spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on another reading series that I know isn’t going to provide the kind of support all our students really need to become successful readers and writers. A one-size fitS all curriculum will not work. Our students need the best sources of reading material with the highest quality instruction we have and that can happen through the reading workshop method.